

MIAMI BEACH

By John Whitener

"Heterosexuality--Can It Be Cured" was the theme of the Caucus of Gay Public Health Workers (GPHW) at the 104th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association held in Miami Beach, October 17-21.

In turning the question around, GPHW hopes that heterosexual colleagues will begin to sense the negative and often devastating effects that this view ("Can homosexuality be cured?") can have on a persons' sense of self, particularly as that relates to sexuality. GPHW also hopes to give support to gay colleagues about the positive nature of their own sexuality by pointing out the absurdity of "curing" anyone's sexual preference.

The Caucus of Gay Public Health Workers was formally established at the 1975 Annual meeting of the association to improve the health care received by sexual minorities, to protect the civil and human rights of gay health workers, and to help eradicate homophobia and sexism from U.S. society.

At the 1975 Annual meeting, GPHW won overwhelming approval by the Association's Governing Council of a resolution on "Homosexuality and Public Health" which calls for (1) endorsement of the Federal Gay Rights Bill, H.B. 5452, (2) appeal of state sodomy laws, (3) adoption by health agencies of equal employment opportunity policies for sexual minorities, (4) provision of education of health workers about sexism, including homophobia, and (5) conduct of studies of HEW practices in the health field which oppress gay persons.

During the past year GPHW sponsored a training session on homosexuality and the health concerns of the gay community for the 85 member staff of the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA represents all disciplines and specialities in public health with a combined membership of 50,000.

At the Miami meeting, GPHW sponsored three scientific sessions. There were four papers presented in the session on "Venereal Disease and Gay Men" and three papers presented on "Gay Issues in Mental Health." "Lesbian Health Issues" was the topic of the third session. There were large turnouts for all of these sessions.

Further work was accomplished on development of Professional Guidelines to help straight health services nationwide be responsive to the health needs of gay people. The Guideline is to be completed by June 1977.

Much has been accomplished in only one year since GPHW was organized, and the future looks promising. Much of this success is due to the time, energy and financial support of Dr. Walter Lear.

Anyone interested in obtaining information about gay health problems, gay health workers or to subscribe to the 1 GPHW newsletter, contact:

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